

COHO BROODSTOCK PROGRAM

Estimated Project Cost:
\$10 Million - \$15 Million

DESCRIPTION:

- The Coho Broodstock Program will collect juvenile coho salmon, rear them in captivity, and generate offspring to be released in suitable tributaries of the Russian River and adjacent watersheds
- The goal is to have these planted fish return to spawn naturally, eventually eliminating the population's dependence on hatchery supplementation
- The Program involves capturing approximately 300 juvenile fish annually from creeks and tributaries in Sonoma and Marin counties and then raising them to maturity at the Don Clausen Fish Hatchery at Lake Sonoma and the Coyote Valley Fish Facility at Lake Mendocino
- Analysis will be conducted to evaluate the genetic variation and relationships among the juvenile fish
- The program will determine which stocks are utilized, how the fish would be spawned, and determine production targets
- The offspring of the captured and hatchery-raised coho salmon will be planted in suitable tributaries and, when grown, return to spawn
- A work group composed of federal, state, and local government agencies along with watershed protection groups was established to identify technical requirements and address regulatory concerns

PROJECT GOAL

Provide a source of native fish to replenish the wild population of coho salmon and prevent local extinction in the Russian River Basin.

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS:

- Americorps Watersheds Stewards Project
- California Department of Fish and Game
- County of Marin
- Institute for Fisheries Resources
- Marin Municipal Water District
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- North Bay Watershed Association
- North Marin Water District
- Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations
- Sonoma County Water Agency
- Trout Unlimited
- University of California, Bodega Marine Laboratory
- University of California, Cooperative Extension
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Various watershed councils/associations

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Over the past decade, coho salmon have been declining throughout the Pacific Northwest and California, reaching particularly precarious levels in central California. These low numbers prompted federal protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1996 when coho salmon were listed as threatened. On Aug. 30, 2002, the California Fish and Game Commission listed coho salmon as an endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act, and tasked CDFG with preparing a recovery strategy by August 2003.



Male coho salmon returning to spawn in Lagunitas Creek in Marin County



Juvenile coho salmon

In central California, with the exception of a few coastal creeks where coho salmon populations are small but stable, only remnant populations remain in isolated tributaries in the Russian River. These remaining coho populations may be too small to rebound on their own.

Unlike conventional hatchery operations, the Coho Broodstock Program would rear fish to maturity in captivity, and utilize their offspring to restock previously occupied coho streams in the Russian River basin and Marin County creeks.



Salmon eggs, alevin, and fry raised under hatchery conditions